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in Order of Work Performed)

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ACT ONE

Scene 1

TOM'S STUDIO, NEW YORK CITY, 2005.

The COMPANY is rehearsing a musical number.

"SHIVERING"

THE GIRLS

YOU'VE GOT ME SHIVERING, QUIVERING, JITTERING, GEE!
DON'T YOU SEE WHAT YOU'RE DOING TO ME?
YOU'VE GOT ME SHIVERING, QUIVERING, JITTERING, WOO!
TAG YOU'RE IT, NOW IT'S UP TO YOU.
YOU'VE GOT ME SHIVERING, QUIVERING, JITTERING, GEE!
COME HERE BOY AND MAKE IT UP TO ME.

SHIVERING, QUIVERING, JITTERING
SHIVERING, QUIVERING, JITTERING
SHIVERING, QUIVERING, JITTERING
DON'T YA SEE WHAT YOU'RE DOING TO ME?

THE GUYS

DO I GET YA SHIVERING, QUIVERING, JITTERING, GEE!
IT'S MY TURN AND IT'S UP TO ME.
SHIVERING, QUIVERING, JITTERING, WOO!
FOR EVERY KISS YOU GIVE ME I'LL GIVE YOU TWO.
SHIVERING, QUIVERING, JITTERING, EEE!
I'LL RUN AND HIDE AND YOU CAN COUNT TO THREE.

SHIVERING, QUIVERING, JITTERING
SHIVERING, QUIVERING, JITTERING
SHIVERING, QUIVERING, JITTERING
DON'T YA SEE WHAT YOU'RE DOING TO ME?

(INSTRUMENTAL BREAK)

MY HEART'S PUMPING DOUBLE TIME.
MY HEAD'S POUNDING, GOING OUT OF MY MIND.
DON'T KNOW, I'M LOCKED IN THIS STORM.
THE SNOW'S BLOWING, COME HERE AND GET ME WARM.

THE GIRLS

SHIVERING, QUIVERING, JITTERING, GEE!
TIME IS TICKING, PUT YOUR ARMS AROUND ME.

THE GUYS

SHIVERING, QUIVERING, JITTERING, WOO!
BETTER CATCH ME NOW CAUSE I'M IN THE MOOD.

ENSEMBLE

SHIVERING, QUIVERING, JITTERING, AYY!

YOU BETTER ACT NOW, BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE.
YOU GOT ME SHIVERING, QUIVERING, JITTERING,
SHIVERING, QUIVERING, JITTERING
SHIVERING, QUIVERING, JITTERING.
DON'T YA SEE WHAT YOU'RE DOING TO ME?
YOU GOT ME SHIVERING, QUIVERING, JITTERING,
SHIVERING, QUIVERING, JITTERING
SHIVERING, QUIVERING, JITTERING.
DON'T YA SEE WHAT YOU'RE DOING TO ME?

All burst into a "C" note. JENO is singing higher than everyone else and even embellishes, going off, doing her own thing, even after the music has stopped.

TOM

What are you doing? That's not how we rehearsed it.

NICKI

Jeno, you were told before to stop it. You always have to try to out-sing us.

JENO

Shut up, Nicki, and sing! If that's what you call it.

Jeno shows off a bracelet.

NICKI

Who'd you get that from?

JENO

Anthony got it for me. He's going to make me a star.

TOM

Sing it the way we rehearsed it. Retirement never tasted so sweet. Ready? From the full company part. Five, six, seven, eight!

Last part of "Shivering" is being played.

ENSEMBLE

SHIVERING, QUIVERING, JITTERING, AAY!
YOU BETTER ACT NOW, BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE.
YOU GOT ME SHIVERING, QUIVERING, JITTERING,
SHIVERING, QUIVERING, JITTERING,
SHIVERING, QUIVERING, JITTERING.
DON'T YA SEE WHAT YOU'RE DOING TO ME?
YOU GOT ME SHIVERING, QUIVERING, JITTERING,
SHIVERING, QUIVERING, JITTERING,

SHIVERING, QUIVERING, JITTERING.
DON'T YA SEE WHAT YOU'RE DOING TO ME?

All students rustle around. TOM notices Jeno just can't play along, she starts picking on NORA.

TOM (cont'd)
What is the problem?

JENO
It's Nora.

NORA
What'd I do?

TOM
Nora sounds fine--

JENO
You can never hear her and she's throwing off my pitch. Sing louder, Nora.

TOM
Jeno, it's like I told you a million times -- it's not all about you!

JENO
You know my way's better!

TOM
That's completely beside the point. You're singing with a group! This isn't a solo act.

JENO
Can I help it if I stand out?

TOM
Music's about giving back. About touching people's hearts. You've been given a gift. Don't abuse it. Just remember, students are like seeds: You need to be the right seed, in enough water, in a pot in the right soil with the best light on it every day.

JENO
Believe me, Tom. I know exactly what I'm doing! Get off of my runway. This is my stage. I'm the star of this show. Everyone else is just a dreamer.

"KEEP ON DREAMIN'"

JENO (cont'd)

To everyone in the room, as though
she's better than them.

YOU WISH YOU COULD BE SINGING,
SINGING LIKE ME.
DO YOU WANT TO BE DANCING?
DANCING LIKE ME?
YOU'D LOVE TO BE MOVING,
MOVING LIKE ME.

I'LL KEEP ON LIVING
WHILE YOU'RE DREAMING YOUR LIFE AWAY.

YOU WISH YOU COULD BE EXCITED,
EXCITED LIKE ME.
DO YOU WANT TO BE ENTICED?
ENTICED LIKE ME?
YOU'D LOVE TO BE MESMERIZED,
MESMERIZED LIKE ME.

I'LL KEEP ON LIVING
WHILE YOU'RE DREAMING YOUR LIFE AWAY.

(INSTRUMENTAL)

I LOVE IT WHEN YOU LOOK AT ME.
I CAN'T IMAGINE HOW YOU MUST FEEL.
YOU SMELL MY PERFUME.
MUST BRING YOU AIR LOOM-ING.
PUT YOUR MIND IN A TWIRL.
I KNOW WHAT I CAN DO TO YOU.
MUST BE LIKE LIGHTNIN' THROUGH YOUR NERVES.
YOU WATCH ME SINGING, MOVING,
SHOCKED BY ALL MY GORGEOUS CURVES.

SO KEEP ON QUESTIONING, QUESTIONING ME.
YOU MUST BE WONDERING, WONDERING ABOUT ME.
SO KEEP ON STARING, YOU GOT A GOOD VIEW OF ME.

I'LL KEEP ON LIVING,
MOVING, SINGING, DANCING
WHILE YOU'RE DREAMING YOUR LIFE AWAY.

Lights out.

End of Scene

SCENE 2

JENO'S HOUSE.

Jeno is on the phone with ANTHONY, while her mother, ANNA, listens nearby.

JENO

Okay, so I'll meet you at the Club Blue tonight.

ANNA

I will not allow this! No daughter of mine is going to be a tinker.

JENO

Mom--

ANNA

Look at what you wear when you go out. And the people you go out with! You were smoking again weren't you? Your Gran died from those cancer sticks. Who are you going out with tonight? Look at you. You want to be a tinker? People are going to ask me what my daughter does for a living and I will have to tell them that my daughter is an uneducated tinker! That's what they were called in Ireland when they didn't finish school--tinkers! You want to be a singer? You want to be a tinker? You don't want to go to college?

JENO

Why should I go to college? Mrs. Baldello said I would never finish high school. So chill.

ANNA

Chill? What do you mean, chill? You listen here, young girl--

JENO

Listen, school is out of the question. This is my life. And I want to live it to the fullest.

ANNA

Live it to the fullest, uneducated? You need to go to school. You're a young woman. Who cares what one teacher told you? Don't listen to her? Men can get away with no college. They can work with their hands or go to a trade school and make very good money, but a girl will get a bad reputation forever.

JENO

When I'm a star, I'm going to have a lot of money.

ANNA

What if your career dies? We're both out in the chill. What if you're husband dies and you are left with five children? You'll be forced to work with your bare hands. No young girl who comes from a good solid family becomes a tinker and dances all over a stage with no education. You want to sing and dance, well, please get an education first. What if something happens to you? What if you hurt yourself? You will have no education to fall back on. I came to this country--

JENO AND ANNA

--with a hundred dollars and a suitcase.

JENO

I know, Mom.

ANNA

It was a long, hard road.

JENO

Mom, listen--

ANNA

You listen here. I will not allow this under my roof. In Ireland they drove all over the land stopping from one place to another setting up, sleazing up, whatever they do.

JENO

You are driving me crazy!

ANNA

These tinkers would all sleep in this big, colorful van and put on shows in the towns. On off hours, they would have their children run into a store and steal a loaf of bread around the back while the parent asks a question at the front desk. It was a setup. You know what I'm talking about. You saw it with your own eyes that time--

JENO

If I'm a tinker, then Gran was a tinker, too.

ANNA

(Making the sign of the cross)
Saints be praised! Dare to call your father's
mother a tinker?

JENO

Well, she was a singer, wasn't she?

ANNA

Your grandmother was a good woman. A sensible
woman. A wife and a mother.

JENO

Mom, she was a singer at heart. She used to
write songs and sing them to me before I went
to sleep at night. Don't you remember that
beautiful voice? It was like angels singing.

ANNA

Yes, but she had the good sense God gave her
not to pursue it.

JENO

Sense? She hated being tied to that house. Her
whole life was one big regret!

ANNA

I grew up with those singers, singing on the
street, trying to swindle you out of a buck.

JENO

Mom, they weren't tinkers--

ANNA

Yeeeeesssssss! They would steal your shoes off
your feet if they thought it was their size!

JENO

Mom, that was long time ago. In Ireland.

ANNA

No, it's here, too. And now my daughter wants
to become one of them. Dancing all over the
stage with no education. Not in my house you
won't. I did not raise you to be a tinker!

JENO

Fine, then! I'm not coming home. Are you happy!

ANNA

Where will you go? With that guido?

JENO

Anthony!

ANNA

Anthony Guido! He's too old for you. There's something I don't trust about him.

JENO

What? He happens to be a music producer. He's going to make me a star!

ANNA

And what is it going to cost you?

JENO

Look, I'm going out tonight. I'm meeting Anthony.

ANNA

I want the best for you. I'm looking out for you.

END OF SCENE

SCENE 3

TOM'S STUDIO.

Tom, Jenó, NICKI & Nora in the studio. JEFF walks in, a pilot, holding his cap under his arm. He's good looking and a little shy. He approaches Jenó, who's closest.

JEFF

Excuse me.

JENO

(With an attitude)
He's hiding over there.

Tom emerges from behind the piano and greets his friend with a smile.

TOM

Oh, hi, Jeff. Jenó, this is Jeff, my neighbor's son. And Jeff, this is Jenó, one of my prize singers.

JEFF

Is she any good?

TOM

She's good, but she's a handful.

JEFF

I admire anyone with talent. I have none.

JENO

Thanks. If my audition goes well on Thursday, you'll be seeing me all over.

JEFF

Well, you let me know. Tom and I are just going to grab some coffee. Would you like to join us?

JENO

No. I'm going to club called Blue. You know, the one on the corner at 17th Street? See you later.

Jeno exits.

END OF SCENE

Scene 4

CLUB BLUE.

On stage left, a BARTENDER serves drinks to a few PATRONS at the bar. Anthony is at the bar, flanked by Nicki & Nora. He's clearly been talking for a while.

Dance music is playing.

Lights up full stage on DANCERS.

NICKI

So...I hear you're a producer for the music industry? Is that all you do? I mean, is that your full-time job?

ANTHONY

Yeah. A little bit of this, a little bit of that.

NORA

A little bit of what?

ANTHONY

Let me guess, you girls want into the business.

NICKI

Well, sure.

NORA

Of course! But...aren't you, like...working with Jen0 right now?

ANTHONY

You think Jen0's the only star in the sky? Well, you girls are just as pretty and talented as her.

NICKI & NORA

You think?

ANTHONY

Absolutely. Just between you and me...you girls could far surpass Jen0. I can pull a few strings.

NICKI & NORA

Really?

ANTHONY

Really. But let's not let Jenó know we had this little chat. Okay?

Anthony hands a business card to the girls.

NICKI & NORA

Sure. Okay. We're in.

ANTHONY

(To Nicki) We can discuss it more...at my house. Maybe you could model for me. You'd need to tone up a bit, but I have these great little pills that'll help you in two weeks, guaranteed!

On stage right, Jenó enters. GUY, accompanied by Jeff, comes up to Jenó.

GUY

You're never going to guess who's here. This is Jeff, Tom's neighbor's son.

JENO

Oh, hi, Jeff. I didn't recognize you without your uniform.

JEFF

You told me you'd be here. You look beautiful.

JENO

Thank you. I do my best.

She spots Anthony across the room.

I have to go.

Jeno makes a beeline for Anthony. Nora sidles over to Jeff.

NORA

Hi, sailor!

JEFF

I'm not a sailor. I'm a pilot.

ANTHONY

Well, are you lookin' mighty sweet tonight!

JENO

You having a good time with the girls?

ANTHONY

Gimme a kiss, baby!

JENO

No...

ANTHONY

(Getting angry) C'mon, I want a kiss. I've been thinkin' about you on this school. Listen, I got better things for you lined up. This Tom guy, I think he's holding you back. Sometimes you have to leave behind the people who are bringing you down.

JEFF

Can I cut in?

ANTHONY

Hey, it's a private party! Make like a stewardess and get me a drink!

JEFF

You're not speaking to me that way.

ANTHONY

Who do you think you are?

JEFF

I know who I am and I know how to respect a lady.

ANTHONY

You don't know what you're getting' yourself involved in.

Anthony puts his finger in Jeff's face. Jeff grabs Anthony's finger.

NICKI

Hey, cut it out!

Nicki tries to grab Anthony's arm, but he flings her away.

NICKI (cont'd)

Ow! That hurts! Shit, I broke a nail.

ANTHONY

Relax!

NICKI

Don't tell me to relax!

Anthony walks over to the bar with
Jeno and addresses the bartender.

ANTHONY

I need a drink. Double tequila.

Bartender serves the drink and
goes into the back room. Anthony
shoves Jeno against the bar.

ANTHONY (cont'd)

Don't you ever show me up like that again! Next
time will be your last. If you want what I have
to offer, then you're going to give me what I
want.

The bartender returns and sees
what has happened. Anthony nurses
his drink while Jeno nurses a
bruised ego. The bartender pulls
Jeno aside.

"ROLL THE DICE"

BARTENDER

WHAT YOU SEE AIN'T ALWAYS WHAT YOU GET.
TWO WRONGS DON'T ALWAYS MAKE IT RIGHT.

BETTER THINK TWICE
BEFORE YOU ROLL THE DICE,
BEFORE YOU ROLL THE DICE.

WHO YOU LOVE CAN BREAK YOUR HEART IN TWO.
WHO YOU TRUST WILL ONE DAY BACKSTAB YOU.

BETTER THINK TWICE,
BEFORE YOU ROLL THE DICE,
BEFORE YOU ROLL THE DICE.

WHAT YOU SOW AIN'T ALWAYS WHAT YOU REAP.
LIKE WHAT THEY SAY, IT'S DO OR DIE.

YOU BETTER THINK TWICE
BEFORE YOU ROLL THE DICE,
BEFORE YOU ROLL THE DICE.

SO TAKE MY ADVICE, IT'S GONNA SAVE YOUR LIFE.
IT CUTS LIKE A KNIFE.
SO TAKE MY ADVICE,
TAKE MY ADVICE, IT'S GONNA SAVE YOUR LIFE.
CUTS LIKE A KNIFE.

YOU KNOW YOU BETTER THINK TWICE.

(INSTRUMENTAL)

TWICE, THINK TWICE
BEFORE YOU ROLL THE DICE,
BEFORE YOU ROLL THE DICE.

THE FUN ONES YOU THINK AIN'T GOT A CLUE.
YOU'RE MISTAKEN--THEY'RE GONNA TURN ON YOU.

BETTER THINK TWICE
BEFORE YOU ROLL THE DICE,
BEFORE YOU ROLL THE DICE.

WHO SMILES AT YOU, JUST WATCH THEIR EYES
'CAUSE AS YOU TURN YOU GOT A BIG SURPRISE.

YOU BETTER THINK TWICE
BEFORE YOU ROLL THE DICE,
BEFORE YOU ROLL THE DICE.

Anthony downs his drink. Then he
lights two cigarettes and passes
one to Jenö, who takes it and
puffs nervously. She massages her
back like she's been hurt.

END OF SCENE

Scene 5

TOM'S STUDIO

The students are rehearsing "Shivering." Tom is singing with them. Jenó is obviously laboring, trying to keep up.

NICKI

Get a load of you, grandma!

Nicki & Nora start laughing.

JENO

I just have to warm up a bit.

NORA

Well, maybe you should have stayed home? We could hold down the fort.

JENO

I have this huge audition tomorrow, for this theater producer. Tom set it up. And Anthony set one up at the end of the week.

NICKI

I thought Anthony said he was setting up an appointment for you. That's what he said last night--

JENO

What else have you heard about Anthony?

NORA

Jeno, you sure you're up for this?

NICKI

Oh, don't worry about her. She's always ready. Aren't you, Jeno?

JENO

I have to be ready for tomorrow. It's a big day.

Off stage the music starts. The girls line up.

"THEY DON'T MAKE MEN"

THE GIRLS

TALL MAN, SOFT TOUCH,
STOCKED FRAME, OH WHAT A SHAME.
THEY DON'T MAKE MEN LIKE THAT ANYMORE!
FOR DAMN SURE.

BRIGHT EYES, ROUGED FACE.
WEALTHY, THEY CERTAINLY
DON'T MAKE MEN LIKE THAT ANYMORE!
FOR DAMN SURE.

HOW STRONG WERE THESE MEN
TO LEAVE SUCH A LASTING IMPRESSION?
LIKE MICHAEL LANDON
JOHN WAYNE
CLARK GABLE, I THREW IN THE TOWEL.
'CAUSE THEY DON'T MAKE MEN LIKE THAT ANYMORE!
FOR DAMN SURE.

(INSTRUMENTAL)

During the song, it's obvious Jenö
is in pretty bad shape and can't
keep up. Suddenly the music stops.

JENO (cont'd)

Sorry, sorry. I...my muscles are still a little
cold.

NORA

Come on, let's do it again. You're screwing us
up, Jenö.

NICKI

We need to get this together for our production
number. And so you don't hurt yourself for your
audition as well.

Music starts again.

THE GIRLS

THEY'D WALK US TO THE DOOR,
NOT ACT LIKE IT'S A BORE,
JUST KISS US GOODNIGHT
AND NOT PUT UP A FIGHT.
THEY DON'T MAKE MEN LIKE THAT ANYMORE!
FOR DAMN SURE.

HOW STRONG WERE THESE MEN
TO LEAVE SUCH A LASTING IMPRESSION?

THEY SHOWED CHIVALRY, INTEGRITY,
RELIABILITY, THEY DEFINITELY
DON'T MAKE MEN LIKE THAT ANYMORE!
FOR DAMN SURE.

THEY WOULD OPEN THE DOOR,
PUT THEIR COAT ON THE FLOOR,
PULL OUT A CHAIR, OH LADIES BEWARE!
THEY DON'T MAKE MEN LIKE THAT ANYMORE!
FOR DAMN SURE.

YOU KNOW, I MIGHT AS WELL STAY HOME.
BECAUSE THEY DON'T MAKE MEN LIKE THAT ANYMORE!

NORA

You're looking better, Jeno!

JENO

You think?

NICKI

Maybe try and push yourself a little further.
You know what they say, no pain, no gain...

In a very farcical attempt at
going further, Jeno attempts to
dance on her own. She is obviously
in very serious pain.

NICKI (cont'd)

Good job!

JENO

I hate the thought that I might not be the
start of the show. I have to do this audition!

NORA

I heard a saying once, "You're most likely to
regret the things you haven't done in life than
regret the things you have done in life."

JENO

I don't want any regrets, that's for sure.

NICKI

It's all about weighing your sacrifices. What
you're willing to do to get the prize. Isn't
that right Jeno?

JENO

I do...but right now...oh, my back hurts...

NICKI

No pain, no gain, Jeno!

"Shape Up or Ship Out" music
begins.

NORA

You don't want to hold back! So to speak...!

NICKI

Wouldn't want to mess up that audition.

NORA

Once in a lifetime chance!

"SHAPE UP OR SHIP OUT"

NORA

DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU HAVE BEEN DOIN',
DON'T CARE WHAT IT'S ABOUT.
BETTER GET WITH THE PROGRAM SOON,
SHAPE UP OR SHIP OUT.

DON'T KNOW IF YOU'RE GOING STRAIGHT.
DON'T KNOW IF YOU ARE ROUND ABOUT.
ALL I KNOW IS ONE THING GIRL,
SHAPE UP OR SHIP OUT!

TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE,
YOU KNOW HE CAN'T WAIT.
TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE,
GOT TO UNLOCK THIS GATE.
YOUR PROBLEM IS YOU PROCRASTINATE.

DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU HAVE BEEN DOIN',
DON'T CARE WHAT IT'S ABOUT.
BETTER GET WITH THE PROGRAM SOON.
SHAPE UP OR SHIP OUT.

DON'T KNOW IF YOU'RE GOING STRAIGHT,
DON'T KNOW IF YOU'RE ROUND ABOUT.
ALL I KNOW IS ONE THING, GIRL,
SHAPE UP OR SHIP OUT

(INSTRUMENTAL)

YOUR CHANCE IS ONLY A CHANCE
IF YOU'RE NOT ABLE TO DANCE.
BITE THE BULLET,
DON'T LET THEM SEE IT IN YOUR FACE.

TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE,
YOU KNOW HE CAN'T WAIT.
TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE,

GOT TO UNLOCK THIS GATE.
YOUR PROBLEM IS YOU PROCRASTINATE.

DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU HAVE BEEN DOIN'
DON'T CARE WHAT IT'S ABOUT.
BETTER GET WITH THE PROGRAM SOON.
SHAPE UP OR SHIP OUT.

Jeno breaks free after a tug-of-war match between Nicki & Nora.

Lights fade to work blue.

End of Scene

(cont'd)

Scene 6

JENO'S BEDROOM.

Jeno is in an over-exaggerated back brace in her bedroom at home. DOCTOR is finishing his examination, with Anna nearby.

DOCTOR

Well, that should keep her humble for a little while.

ANNA

How long, exactly?

DOCTOR

Well, Mrs. O'Connor, considering the severity of your daughter's injuries, I'd say about a month.

JENO

(Incredulous) A month?

DOCTOR

Maybe more. Consider it a free pass for her to lie around in bed all day.

ANNA

I'll consider it a free pass for her to apply to college.

JENO

(Perturbed.) Listen, Doc...I got an audition...today. This thing has to come off by 3 o'clock.

DOCTOR

If you strain your back any more, you could cause damages that may be irreparable. Don't worry about dancing again. I'm concerned about you walking again. This more serious than you think, Jeno. Auditions come and go. Take care of yourself.

JENO

Do you have any idea who the Nederbergers are? Well, they're only one of the most powerful Broadway producers in all of New York. I have an appointment with them. If I'm not ready, I may never get it again. And later in the week, Anthony set me up with a big-time record producer. One that I may never get again.

(MORE)

JENO(cont'd)
I'm not going to let some sort of...back pain
stop me from achieving what I'm meant to do.

DOCTOR
We all have our little dreams. You'll get over
it. We all do. If you hurt yourself any
further, this will be nothing but a pipe dream.

JENO
(Angrier.) Excuse me. It's not a pipe dream-

Anna takes the Doctor aside, stage
right.

ANNA
Will my insurance cover this?

DOCTOR
Yes, it will be fine. Here is the prescription
she needs.

He hands Anna the medication.

Spotlight on upstage right. Mrs.
Baldello enters.

MRS. BALDELLO
I remember when you were just a little girl.
Skinny. Not the prettiest, either. You always
told me you wanted to dance on stage, but I
didn't think that would ever happen. I would
have laughed myself silly. It just seemed
impossible.

JENO
(Yelling) Sometimes people change.

DOCTOR
Are you taking to us?

ANNA
Who's changing?

JENO
Oh, nothing

MRS. BALDELLO
I can remember that you really were an ugly
duckling. Even the kids used to pick on you in
school. I remember feeling so sorry for you. I
would drive by your house and there you'd
always be, out on your front porch,
playing...alone. Well--

JENO

I do have it!

ANNA

Jeno!

MRS. BALDELLO

I guess you can hang up your dancing shoes, because you never had it. Here's the end of your dream.

Mrs. Baldello exits.

ANNA

What's happening to you?

JENO

It's Mrs. Baldello. She's always in my brain. I'm still haunted by my third grade teacher.

Tom and Jeff enter. Tom is carrying a bouquet of flowers. He hands Jeno the flowers.

TOM

How's the patient? These are for you. Anna, please meet Jeff.

ANNA

Pleased to meet you, Jeff.

JEFF

My pleasure. (He turns to Jeno). For someone who's laid out on her back, you look very well.

JENO

I'm feeling a lot better, thank you-

ANNA

Well, her injuries are pretty severe.

DOCTOR

I've prescribed her bed rest, until further notice. It's a little worse than it looks.

JENO

It's probably not as bad as it looks. I mean, there's major, sharp pain shooting up through my base of my spine to the top of my temples. God, I need a cigarette.

DOCTOR

How much more do you want to damage your life?

ANNA

The doctor said your back is injured. I told you already to stop smoking. Now you have no choice. The nicotine is very harmful to your back now and it can totally stop the healing process. It could do damage for life now.

JEFF

(To Jenó, softly) I apologize for getting in that situation with Anthony. You're a sweet girl. I don't want to act like that in front of you. (Louder, for the others.) Well, I've got to go now. I'd like to see you when I get back.

ANNA

Yes, yes, by all means!

Anna, Jeff, and the Doctor exit.

TOM

I'm so sorry about this, Jenó.

JENO

Oh, listen, it's fine. I'm just going to get my purse and we can go.

TOM

Go where?

JENO

I thought maybe we'd go to your studio and warm up and get ready.

TOM

Jenó, you're not auditioning today.

JENO

Why not?

TOM

I just don't think you're in any position--

JENO

I feel fine.

TOM

No you don't.

JENO

(Throwing her pillow down on the floor.)
Don't tell me how I feel!

TOM

Fine, then, let's talk about the way you look.

She ties a bright colored scarf
around the front of her brace.

JENO

What's wrong with the way I look?

TOM

Jeno, look...I've canceled the audition.

Jeno attempts to jump out of her
chair, hurting herself even more.

JENO

You what?!

TOM

I think you'd be better off waiting until-

JENO

How dare you! We've waited a long time for this
appointment. I can't disappoint them.

TOM

Calm down--

JENO

Don't tell me to calm down! You're not the one
trying to make it, here.

TOM

Wait a minute, we're a team. If you don't look
good, I don't look good and we'll never get an
appointment again.

JENO

Oh, come on, Tom. You know you wouldn't have
anything without me.

TOM

What?

JENO

Let's just say it the way it is. It's because
of me this showcase will look as good as it
does. It's because of me that the Nederbergers
would even want anything to do with you.

TOM

Okay...I don't know if this is the right time or
place, but I think maybe we should talk about
what it means to "make it."

JENO

(Flippantly.) I don't really have time to talk. You need to get me that audition.

TOM

I've been working with you, as your teacher and mentor for many years now and I've watched you become progressively more and more...

JENO

Amazing, fantastic, positively gorgeous.

TOM

Ruthless.

JENO

Are you kidding? I'm not doing anything anyone else in this business doesn't do. I have dreams that have to be conquered. I have to keep pushing and pushing even if it kills me. Fame is power. Who isn't ruthless in this business?

TOM

Lots of people. Good people. Making music is about touching people's hearts, not running over everyone you meet. Burning bridges isn't a career move. It's not about using people. It's about working with people. Don't make compromises you're going to regret later in life.

JENO

Like what?

TOM

Like...maybe hanging out with less desirable men who you think might help you.

JENO

I have no idea what you're talking about! Anthony and I have a real relationship!

TOM

Jeno, I'm only telling you all this because I care about you.

JENO

You need me because I'm making your school as good as it its. You're just one more person who wants to hold me back. Get out of my way.

Jeno pushes him gently away from her.

TOM

No! I've been nothing but supportive! You have true talent. I want you to get there more than anyone!

TOM (cont'd)

I think that this back injury is a mixed blessing. Maybe now you'll have some time to reflect on the way you've been handling things. The choices you make will carry you for the rest of your lifetime. You need to grow up... realize your mistakes and correct them. You don't want to live life with regret.

JENO

It's time for our relationship to end. I've learned as much as you can teach me. I need to move forward. It's time for me to leave your school and step up.

TOM

You don't really mean that. You're just upset--

JENO

All good things must come to an end, right? It's been nice working with you, Tom.

TOM

Jeno, you're just angry--

JENO

Yes. We waited a long time for this audition and now you've screwed it up. Maybe Anthony was right. Sometimes in order to get to the top, you have to leave behind people who are bringing you down.

TOM

I think when you are able to reflect on this, you're going to feel really sorry about the things you've said. (Beat.) When you first got into music you wanted to do it for your grandmother. Remember? It was such a pure instinct. It came from the heart. What happened?

JENO

My grandmother died never having achieved her dream. That's what happened.

TOM

You don't have to do it this way, Jeno. You don't have to be so ruthless in order to achieve your dream.

JENO

What would you know? Where's your dream Tom?
You're only a teacher. Oh, that's right, "those
who can't do, teach" -- right?

"DO IT ON YOUR OWN"

TOM

DO IT ON YOUR OWN, SO IT WILL BE YOUR OWN,
OR YOU'LL BE FIGHTING THE WORLD OUT THERE.
TAKE IT FROM ME, THE LABELS AIN'T GONNA BE,
YOU'LL BE FIGHTIN' THE WORLD OUT THERE.

THEY'LL OWN YOU, AND CONDONE YOU,
THEY'LL DISOWN YOU, AND YOU'LL BE ALL ALONE,
FIGHTIN' THE WORLD OUT THERE.

YELLING, PUNCHING, KICKING, SCREAMING,
YOU'RE FIGHTIN' THE WORLD OUT THERE.

FIGHTIN' THE WORLD OUT THERE.
WORK THE GRINDSTONE, YOU'LL BE CONDONED,
FIGHTIN' THE WORLD OUT THERE.

YOU'RE STRINGS TO THEIR PUPPET,
EATING OUT OF THEIR BUCKET,
YOU'LL BE FIGHTING THE WORLD OUT THERE.

THEY'LL OWN YOU, AND CONDONE YOU,
THEY'LL DISOWN YOU, AND YOU'LL BE ALL ALONE,
THE WORLD SEEMS EMPTY WITH YOU OUT THERE.
YELLING, PUNCHING, KICKING, SCREAMING,
YOU'RE FIGHTIN' THE WORLD OUT THERE.

PEOPLE DID IT THE WRONG WAY.
THEY SOLD THEIR SOULS
AND THEN WHEN THEY MADE IT
THEIR HEARTS COULDN'T CONSOLE.

Ad lib lines. Tom tries to
convince Jeno of the pitfalls she
faces.

THE STREETS PAVED WITH GOLD.
YOU'LL NEVER SELL YOUR SOUL,
FIGHTIN' THE WORLD OUT THERE.

WHEN YOU TURN TOO OLD
YOU'LL BE TOSSED OUT IN THE COLD,
FIGHTIN' THE WORLD OUT THERE.

THEY'LL OWN YOU, AND CONDONE YOU,
THEY'LL DISOWN YOU, AND YOU'LL BE ALL ALONE,

THE WORLD SEEMS EMPTY WITH YOU OUT THERE.
YELLING, PUNCHING, KICKING, SCREAMING,
YOU'RE FIGHTIN' THE WORLD OUT THERE.

TAKE IT FROM ME, THE LABELS AIN'T GONNA BE,
SEEMS EMPTY WITH YOU OUT THERE.

Tom turns solemnly to Jenó.

TOM (cont'd)

I thought I taught you that cream always rises
to the top. I guess in your case it just turned
sour. Jenó, I thought you were a better person.
I guess I was wrong.

Tom exits. After a moment, Nicki &
Nora enter.

NICKI & NORA

Hi, girlfriend!

JENO

Hi!

NORA

What's that? Oh, you really are hurt.

NICKI

Is that the newest in back pain fashion? Let me
corset it.

JENO

It's not a corset!

Both laugh as Anthony enters.

ANTHONY

(Horrorified) Hey, babycakes, what's up with that
brace?

JENO

It's a back brace. I hurt myself in rehearsal.
But I only have to wear it for a few days. I'll
be as good as new by the time we have our
audition. How soon is it going to be?

ANTHONY

(Stalling) Uh, I'm waiting for them to get back
to me.

JENO

Oh, okay.

ANTHONY

I hate those things. They look like...sick people. And that's just not cool. It doesn't go with the bracelet I bought you. (Turning to Nicki) So, what are your two girls doing here? Discussing anything in particular?

NICKI

Nothing you have to worry about.

ANTHONY

I was hoping to take you to my cousin's place in Little Italy. It caters to, well...it's a pretty nice joint. But it doesn't look like you're up for it.

JENO

Not exactly.

NICKI

I tell you what, Anthony. Give us a few minutes alone with Jenno, and before you know it, the girl of your dreams will emerge on the other side of that door. Give us ten minutes. Can you wait that long?

ANTHONY

Uh, yeah. I guess so. (Quietly.) Does that mean you're gonna take that back brace off?

NICKI

It'll be like magic. I promise.

NORA

Cinderella's fairy godmother has nothing on us.

ANTHONY

Alrighty then. I'm a little uptight. I think I need a cigarette. I'll wait outside.

Anthony and Nicki wink at one another. Anthony exits.

JENO

Tell me the truth...can I go out like this?

Nicki & Nora stand silently, sort of smiling at Jenno. Finally, Nicki breaks the silence.

NICKI

Well, sure! Sure you can! Right, Nora? She can go out like that! I mean...it certainly enhances your...your...

NORA

Shoulders.

NICKI

Bust line! Yeah, absolutely.

NORA

And your collarbones. And your ribcage.

NICKI

But, who cares if you look like some sort of
linebacker? Anthony loves you no matter what!
He's an upstanding kind of guy, right?

JENO

(Yelling.) This isn't going to work. What the
hell have I done? (Beat.) Listen, Nicki...could
you go in my place?

NICKI

Moi?

NORA

Her?

JENO

Yeah. Would you be a friend and go in my place?
I really can't go like this and I'm really
hurting. I have to take this pain medication. I
think there's dancing there...and...go in my place
and promise me you'll have a great time for me.

NICKI

For you, Jen? Anything.

JENO

But...here's the thing. I know how to handle
Anthony, but he's a little...hands-on at times.

NICKI

Hands on? Really?

JENO

It's true. You really have to know how to
handle men like him. Otherwise, he'll get
totally out of hand. So to speak.

NICKI

Well, gee...what would a girl like me do to
defend herself?

JENO

(Partly to herself) Well, I hope it doesn't come to that.

NORA

I invented this thing called shock therapy. Once you get it down, you're going to be excited to try it. Works every time. Listen up. (Talking.) Ever see one of these shockers? It's a shock-um. You can use it on a horrible date. It's my invention called "shock therapy"!

"SHOCK 'EM"

NORA

YOU BETTER STOP HIM BECAUSE
I'LL SHOCK HIM IF HE MISBEHAVES.

NORA (cont'd)

These guys are so unpredictable. Who do they think they are? These brute guys come right up to you and put their arms around you. "Do you want to get together some time?" No! Who are you and get your claws off of me! The only reason I'm talking to you is because my ex-boyfriend is over there and I want to get him jealous. I should have shocked him!

NICKI & NORA

YOU BETTER STOP HIM BECAUSE
I'LL SHOCK HIM IF HE MISBEHAVES.

NORA

You know, you're on the first date and he's walking you to the door and he tries to slobber all over you. Like you're really enjoying his kiss! If he only knew that you're counting down the seconds until you can slam the door in his face! Not to mention you found slight faggy tendencies with him at the dinner table. I should have shocked him!

JENO, NICKI & NORA

YOU BETTER STOP HIM BECAUSE
I'LL SHOCK HIM IF HE MISBEHAVES.

NORA

Then this nutty guy asked me out but I was bored so I said, "What the heck." I made a date at 5 p.m.

(MORE)

NORA(cont'd)
I figured if he was a creep like all of the rest I could take a cab home in time for a good movie. Well, that's what happened. He started groping my leg under the table. I kicked him. I really should have shocked him!

JENO, NICKI & NORA
YOU BETTER STOP HIM BECAUSE
I'LL SHOCK HIM IF HE MISBEHAVES.

NORA
This thing really comes in handy. I know all you men think you have one over us...but that's because we let you think it. Boy, you better be careful, because I'm getting this on the market, and us ladies are getting wise to your tricks. You mess with us, come too close, beware...You're going to get shocked.

JENO, NICKI & NORA
YOU BETTER STOP.

NICKI
YOU BETTER STOP.

NORA
YOU BETTER STOP.

JENO
YOU BETTER STOP.

JENO, NICKI & NORA
YOU BETTER STOP HIM BECAUSE
I'LL SHOCK HIM IF HE MISBEHAVES.

Fade to blue lights as the girls laugh.

JENO
That was great everybody. I need a little rest. The Vicodin is starting to kick in.

NICKI & NORA
Bye, Jenó.

SPIRIT enters.

"THAT'S WHAT YOU GET (THE GAME)"

SPIRIT
YOU'RE IN TODAY AND GONE TOMORROW.
UP RIGHT NOW AND SHOT DOWN IN SORROW.
THAT'S WHAT YOU GET WHEN YOU'RE IN THE GAME.

ROLLER COASTER THAT LEADS NOWHERE.
GO STRAIGHT UP AND PLUNGE DOWN, IT'S NO FAIR.
THAT'S WHAT YOU GET WHEN YOU'RE IN THE GAME.

THEY SAID IT WOULDN'T BE EASY.
I LEARNED A LONG TIME AGO,
WAS TOLD YOU NEED MORE THAN TALENT.
JUST TO PUT ON A SHOW.

OUT IN SPACE AND WON'T COME DOWN FOR NO ONE.
JOB STAND STILL AND THEN YOU'RE BACK TO SQUARE ONE.
THAT'S WHAT YOU GET WHEN YOU'RE IN THE GAME.

WAS TOO CUTTHROAT FOR TONY BENNETT.
NO ONE KNOWS YOU'RE FEELING SCHIZOPHRENIC.
THAT'S WHAT YOU GET WHEN YOU'RE IN THE GAME.

THEY SAID IT WOULDN'T BE EASY.
I LEARNED A LONG TIME AGO,
WAS TOLD YOU NEED MORE THAN TALENT.
JUST TO PUT ON A SHOW.

I LOVE THE LIFE THAT I LEAD.
YOU KNOW YOU'RE CRAZY INDEED.
I GOT TO LOVE FOR THE DREAM.
YOU NEED A JOB, IT SEEMS.
I CAN'T STOP NOW.
YOU'VE TURNED CRAZY SOMEHOW.
I GOT TO WORK TILL I DIE.
WELL, I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY.
I GOT TO KEEP GOING SOME MORE.
YOU'RE GONNA DROP TO THE FLOOR.
JUST ONE MORE SONG, STOP GETTING' HUNG ON.
YOU KNOW YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND.
YOU'RE TOTALLY OUT OF HAND.

WELL, I WAS UP YESTERDAY, BUT I'LL BE DOWN TOMORROW.
ENJOY THE HIGHS, 'CAUSE WHEN YOU DROP IT'S SO LOW.

THAT'S WHAT YOU GET WHEN YOU'RE IN THE GAME.
NO POTENTIAL, THEN YOU GOT IT ALL.
THE HIGHER UP THE LADDER, THE HARDER YOU FALL.
THAT'S WHAT YOU GET WHEN YOU'RE IN THE GAME.

THEY SAID IT WOULDN'T BE EASY.
I LEARNED A LONG TIME AGO,
WAS TOLD YOU NEED MORE THAN TALENT.
JUST TO PUT ON A SHOW.

HAVEN'T LEARNED FROM HOW
THE BUSINESS IS A WASTE.
THE SAME DOOR THAT OPENS
WILL SLAM RIGHT IN YOUR FACE.

THAT'S WHAT YOU GET WHEN YOU'RE IN THE GAME.
WELCOME TO THE BUSINESS.
THAT'S WHAT YOU GET WHEN YOU'RE IN THE GAME.

Spirit fades back as lights fade
out.

END OF SCENE

SCENE 7

JENO'S BEDROOM, ONE WEEK LATER.

Anna is trying to adjust Jeno's back brace and make her more comfortable.

JENO

Ow! Mom! Be careful!

ANNA

Why should I be careful! You were up all night tapping around the room! You think your back hurts because of me? You're going to be crippled! And it won't be because I'm changing your sheets!!!

JENO

What is your problem!

ANNA

You are my problem! The doctor told you to stay in bed!

JENO

I think he's a quack. He told me I'd be on my back for a month and in one week I'm feeling better.

ANNA

Quack or no quack...you're the one in pain.

JENO

I've got to go out tonight...

ANNA

With who? Oh, no...

JENO

Mom, you don't understand.

ANNA

You're going out with that Guido again!

JENO

Anthony!

ANNA

Anthony Guido! He's not coming into my house!

JENO

That's fine because we're going out.

ANNA

Where?

JENO

I'm not telling you where.

ANNA

You listen to me, little girl. This quest you have to be a star is killing you. It's crippling you! And that is killing me! You want what you want so badly, you're going to kill the both of us.

JENO

Then I'll die trying!

Anna throws a book at her. Jenó picks it up.

ANNA

I signed you up for a college class online. They said you could do the work from home. Might as well read something. Educate yourself a little. Show mean Mrs. Baldello she was wrong about you.

The doorbell rings.

ANNA (cont'd)

Take your tap shoes off and stay a while. I'll get the door.

Anna exits for a moment and quickly returns.

ANNA (cont'd)

(Much happier.) It's that nice Jeff boy. The pilot.

She flits around Jenó's room with a feather duster.

JENO

Tell him to go away. I don't want him to see me like this. Plus, I have no use for...pilots.

Anna sprays perfume on Jenó, making Jenó choke.

ANNA

No, I will not. I like this boy. And he likes you. I'm going to invite him in. And you are going to be pleasant. And there's nothing you can do about it, because you can barely walk!

Anna pinches Jenó's cheeks and exits to retrieve Jeff. Jenó sits and scowls. After a moment, Jeff enters. Anna pops her head in the door.

ANNA (cont'd)

If your friend Anthony shows up, I'll tell him you're not going out.

Anna exits.

JENO

Mom--

JEFF

Hi! How's the patient?

JENO

(Grumpily.) Fine.

JEFF

I thought you might need some cheering up. Can't get out much these days, can you?

JENO

Actually, I'm really just fine. I'm going dancing tonight.

JEFF

Dancing? No kidding...

JENO

No. No kidding.

JEFF

Wow. Well, that's just great. To think, I was worried about you.

JENO

Me? Oh no. Never.

JEFF

Maybe, when you're feeling better-not that you're not feeling super right now-we could...go out.

JENO

(Sarcastically.) And leave this place? Why mess with perfection?

JEFF

Sincerely...I love being able to get to know you like this. It's really special.

(MORE)

JEFF(cont'd)
I'm getting to know exactly who you are this way. I like what I'm seeing.

JENO
You do?

JEFF
Oh, yeah. You're tough, hard to handle, stubborn, sarcastic, clever, witty...and amazingly beautiful.

JENO
Thank you.

JEFF
I just know everything's going to be all right. You wouldn't have been given a gift and not be expected to use it.

JENO
It...sure doesn't feel like much of a gift right now.

JEFF
No, nothing does when you're in the middle of it. But I have faith in you. I think you're going to be just great on the other side of this.

Pause.

JENO
My grandmother died with her music still inside of her. She was so gifted. A truly amazing singer. You could see in her eyes that she never fulfilled her dream. Every time I think about it, it makes me so sad for her.

JEFF
But you want to do it the right way, don't you?

No response from Jeno.

JEFF (cont'd)
There are all different kinds of ways to use your gift the right way...and still fulfill your dream. Teachers, for example--

JENO
Teachers?

JEFF
Yes. Think of the sacrifices they go through every single day.

JENO
(Solemnly.) Yes. It's tremendous.

JEFF
Speaking of which...Tom says hi. He cares for you.

JENO
Tell him...thanks.

JEFF
So, what d'ya do for fun around here?

JENO
Not much. I mostly just sit around and I've been doodling words. Melodies come to me. They remind me of my grandmother. I hear them all day long.

JEFF
I'd love to hear what you've been writing.

JENO
You would?

She looks wistfully towards Jeff.

"EVERYTHING"

JEFF
YOU'RE EVERYTHING I ALWAYS THOUGHT I WANTED,
YOU'RE EVERYTHING I ALWAYS THOUGHT I NEEDED.
YOU'RE EVERYTHING I ALWAYS THOUGHT I'D LOVE...RIGHT NOW.
YOU'RE EVERYTHING I ALWAYS THOUGHT I WANTED,
EVERYTHING I ALWAYS THOUGHT I NEEDED.
EVERYTHING I ALWAYS THOUGHT I'D LOVE...RIGHT NOW.

(DANCE BREAK SECTION)

JENO
WELL YOU'RE EVERYTHING I NEVER THOUGHT I WANTED,
EVERYTHING I NEVER THOUGHT I NEEDED.
EVERYTHING I NEVER THOUGHT I'D LOVE... 'TIL NOW.

JEFF
EVERYTHING I NEVER THOUGHT I WANTED.

JENO
EVERYTHING I NEVER THOUGHT I NEEDED.

JENO AND JEFF
EVERYTHING I NEVER THOUGHT I'D LOVE... 'TIL NOW.

Fade to work blue lights.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

Scene 1

BEATNIK DANCE CLUB.

Dance music plays. Anthony is impatiently waiting for Nicki. When she finally arrives, she runs up to Anthony and plants a kiss on his cheek. Nicki enters.

NICKI

Sorry! Sorry! How do I look?

ANTHONY

Is that supposed to make up for bein' a full hour late.

NICKI

You mean I'm not worth the wait?

ANTHONY

Only because we had a great time together at my cousins'. But that's the only reason why I'll wait this time. But I won't wait again.

NICKI

Why'd you wanna meet here, anyway?

ANTHONY

'Cause I wanted to see what you're really made of.

NICKI

Sweet thing, you already know what I'm made of.

ANTHONY

He, he, he...yeah. (Beat.) But there's a whole team of girls just waiting for me outside.

He slips the spaghetti strap off her dress slowly off her shoulder.

ANTHONY (cont'd)

Jeno, she's got talent, but she wouldn't...follow instructions. You know what I mean?

NICKI

Oh, yeah, I do! I'm takin' those pills you gave me. I look more toned, don't you think?

ANTHONY

Yeah, I just thought it was the outfit. Yeah,
you look more toned. But can you dance?

NICKI

Let's not talk about Jenó. You want to see me
dance. I'll make you stand up at attention for
my dance.

ANTHONY

If you could do that babe, I'll make it worth
your while. Oh, yeah, I'll make you a star.

"SEXY"

NICKI

SEXY, SEXY,
YOU HAD TO BRING THAT VOODOO TO ME.
SEXY, SEXY,
IT FEELS LIKE LIGHTNING THROUGH MY BODY.

SEXY, SEXY,
THE WAY YOU ACT EXCITES ME.
LET ME WATCH YOU LET ME STARE,
CANCEL PLANS I'M NOT GOIN' NOWHERE.

I JUST WANT TO STAY HERE WITH YOU IN MY VIEW.
UNPLUG THE PHONE, TURN OFF THE LIGHTS, AND TV TOO.

SEXY, SEXY,
YOU HAD TO CAST A SPELL ON ME.
SEXY, SEXY,
COLOGNE HYPNOTIZES ME.
SEXY, SEXY,
SPARKS FLY WHEN YOU'RE AROUND ME.
LET ME WATCH YOU LET ME STARE,
CANCEL PLANS I'M NOT GOIN' NOWHERE.

I JUST WANT TO STAY HERE WITH YOU IN MY VIEW.
UNPLUG THE PHONE, TURN OFF THE LIGHTS, AND TV TOO.

(INSTRUMENTAL)

During instrumental break, Anthony
slips bracelet on Nicki's wrist.

SEXY, SEXY,
KEEP BRINGING THAT VOODOO TO ME.
SEXY, SEXY,
IT FEELS LIKE LIGHTNING THROUGH MY BODY.
SEXY, SEXY,
THE WAY YOU ACT EXCITES ME.
LET ME WATCH YOU LET ME STARE,
CANCEL PLANS I'M NOT GOIN' NOWHERE.

I JUST WANT TO STAY HERE WITH YOU IN MY VIEW.
UNPLUG THE PHONE, TURN OFF THE LIGHTS, AND TV TOO.

DID YOU HEAR WHAT I SAID?
KEEP BRINGING THAT VOODOO,
KEEP BRINGING THAT VOODOO,
KEEP BRINGING THAT VOODOO.

END OF SCENE

SCENE 2

JENO'S ROOM.

The Doctor is examining Jen0 with Anna in the room.

DOCTOR

Say, I saw your friend the other day...Nicki, is that her name?

JENO

Really?

DOCTOR

Yeah. She was with an older guy. Must be that Anthony.

ANNA

Local hoodlum.

JENO

He's not a hoodlum.

DOCTOR

I haven't really heard good things about him, either. (Beat) Well, enough gossip, let's talk about your back. Just as I suspected, it's very serious. There's been a slight improvement, but not as much as there needs to be. At this point I can't rule out surgery.

JENO

What does that mean?

ANNA

It means it's bad news, that's what it means.

JENO

No, what I'm asking is...will I be able to dance again?

DOCTOR

We'll do everything we can for you. Let me talk to your Mom about scheduling appointments for surgery.

Mrs. Baldello enters.

MRS. BALDELLO

(Laughs.) Little Jenny! I remember a time when you were just this high...

LITTLE JENNY, about eight years old, comes on stage and into a spot.

MRS. BALDELLO (cont'd)

You were such a sad little girl. You were going to sing and dance. I knew you never quite had it. What were you, eight or nine?

JENO

I was eight.

MRS. BALDELLO

Eight? There you were in the school play in front of absolutely everyone. You froze. And then, do you remember what happened next?

Little Jenny is standing frozen in front of the audience and we can hear a growing, cackling laughter.

MRS. BALDELLO (cont'd)

They laughed at you. You were no good on stage, and you didn't study enough to be smart in the class.

Doctor and Anna reenter.

DOCTOR

What we need to do is focus on healing her back so she has no problem walking.

ANNA

How risky is the surgery?

DOCTOR

Yes, she'll be able to walk in due time. But dancing...?

He shrugs his shoulders.

MRS. BALDELLO

You might as well hang up your dancing shoes forever.

JENO

I will dance again!

DOCTOR

I'm going to try my best. I have to go. I have another appointment with a teacher at the school, Mrs. Baldello. You know her, yes?

JENO

I've been trying hard to forget her.

ANNA

I'll make you some tea-

JENO

Mom? (Beat.) Please don't leave.

Anna goes to Jenos bed and sits
next to her.

JENO (cont'd)

Looks like you're stuck with me.

ANNA

I could never be stuck with you. I love you.

JENO

I quit smoking. I'm sorry..for everything.

ANNA

I'm sorry, too...for everything.

JENO

I'm really scared, Mom.

ANNA

I know. But no matter what happens, I'll take
care of you. (Beat.) I think a nice cup of tea
will make you feel better.

JENO

All I want is to sing.

ANNA

Then write your own songs.

JENO

How?

ANNA

Listen to the music in your heart. That's what
grandma used to do. Say a prayer to St.
Anthony.

Anna exits, leaving Jenos all alone
in her dark room. Jenos begins to
cry.

"ST. ANTHONY"

Jenos begins to speak lyrics before
vocals start.

JENO

I lost my heart, and I lost my soul. I lost my
mind, I went out of control.

SPIRIT (SINGING) AND JENO
(SPEAKING)

I LOST MY HEART, AND I LOST MY SOUL.
I LOST MY MIND, IT WENT OUT OF CONTROL.
I LOST MY HEALTH AND I LOST MY FRIENDS.
I LOST MY DREAMS, NOW WHERE DOES THIS END?
SO I HAD NOTHING LEFT.

I KNELT DOWN AND HELD BEADS TO MY CHEST,
AND I CRIED TO ST. ANTHONY,
COME AND HELP ME PLEASE.
ST. ANTHONY, ST. ANTHONY,
PLEASE COME AROUND THERE'S SOMETHING LOST
AND IT CAN'T BE FOUND.

I GOT BACK MY HEART, I GOT BACK MY SOUL.
I GOT BACK MY MIND, EVEN OUT OF CONTROL.
I GOT BACK MY HEALTH, BACK MY FRIENDS,
GOT BACK MY DREAMS, I HOPE IT DON'T END.

SO I LEARNED MY LESSON WELL,
TO CHERISH LIFE TO THE BEST THAT I CAN,
AND WHEN I'M SAD I CALL ST. ANTHONY...
COME HELP ME PLEASE.
ST. ANTHONY, ST. ANTHONY,
PLEASE COME AROUND THERE'S SOMETHING LOST
AND IT CAN'T BE FOUND.

SO NOW I CHERISH MY HEART AND I CHERISH MY SOUL,
I CHERISH MY MIND EVEN OUT OF CONTROL.
I CHERISH MY HEALTH, I CHERISH MY FRIENDS,
I CHERISH MY DREAMS, PLEASE SAY IT WON'T END.

"I WISH"

JENO

DO YOU KNOW I SEE YOU WHEN YOUR BACK IS TURNED,
AND I SEE THAT FAMILIAR LOOK IN YOUR EYES,
DO YOU KNOW I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE THINKING
WHEN YOU'RE ACROSS THE ROOM,
NOW YOU KNOW WHY I GOT TO SAY GOODBYE.

DO YOU NOW WHO I AM?
DO YOU FEEL WHAT I'M FEELING?
I WISH I ONLY HAD LOVE FOR YOU.
I KNOW YOU SEE ME WHEN MY BACK IS TURNED,
AND YOU SEE THAT FAMILIAR LOOK IN MY EYES,
I KNOW YOU KNOW WHAT I'M THINKING
WHEN I'M ACROSS THE ROOM,
NOW YOU KNOW WHY I GOT TO SAY GOODBYE.

DO YOU KNOW WHO I AM?
DO YOU FEEL WHAT I'M FEELING?
I WISH I ONLY HAD LOVE FOR YOU

DO YOU KNOW WHO I AM?
DO YOU FEEL WHAT I'M FEELING?
I WISH I ONLY HAD LOVE FOR YOU

(SLOW)

SO NOW WHEN YOU SEE ME AND MY BACK IS TURNED,
AND YOU SEE THAT FAMILIAR LOOK IN MY EYES,
PLEASE JUST TURN AROUND AND WALK AWAY,
YOU KNOW. WE DON'T DESERVE EACH OTHER ANYWAY.

(FAST)

DO YOU KNOW WHO I AM?
DO YOU FEEL WHAT I'M FEELING?
I WISH I ONLY HAD LOVE FOR YOU.
DO YOU KNOW WHO I AM
DO YOU FEEL WHAT I'M FEELING
I WISH I ONLY HAD LOVE FOR YOU.

Fade to black.

End of Scene

SCENE 3

TOM'S STUDIO.

Tom is alone in his studio and is approached by a young girl, JO JO, who is a student.

Light on JO JO stage left.

JO JO

Hi Tom.

TOM

Oh, hi, Jo Jo.

JO JO

What are you doing?

TOM

Just thinking.

JO JO

What about?

TOM

Well, actually, do you think you'd like to be a singer when you get older?

JO JO

I'm a singer now.

TOM

Yes, I know, but you're very young now. What would you like to do?

JO JO

I don't know. I'm just a kid. I know that I want to have fun. If it's not fun, I don't want to do it.

TOM

I think that is a great philosophy.

JO JO

Did you always want to be a teacher?

TOM

Well, not exactly. I always wanted to be a songwriter. See, I had a teacher, who was really inspiring...

Light stage right as Charlie, Tom's teacher, enters the scene as Tom reflects.

CHARLIE

Now listen, Tom. You are an excellent musician and you have an excellent voice.

YOUNG TOM

And don't forget the jokes, too.

CHARLIE

You're like a seed. You need to be the right seed, under the right light, in the right water, in the right soil, and you can then become what it takes to be the best. Another one of my great philosophies is, Cream always rises to the top. Don't ever forget that.

YOUNG TOM

Well, thanks Charlie. On that note, I have some pretty amazing news! (Beat.) I got offered a deal!

CHARLIE

Congratulations! With who? (Suddenly disapprovingly.) Oh, no.

YOUNG TOM

Charlie, it's not as bad as you think--

CHARLIE

I told you about Barry Goodman and his company. They're not on the up-and-up.

YOUNG TOM

But they make people into stars! I could be like Elvis Presley! The Elvis Presley of the music industry! This is my big chance.

CHARLIE

Look at Elvis? Tom--

YOUNG TOM

Please be happy for me. I really, really want this.

CHARLIE

I know, but wouldn't you rather have it when it's right? Did they offer you a contract? Let me see it.

Young Tom hands the contract over to Charlie.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

You can't agree to any of this.

YOUNG TOM

Charlie, I know it seems little unfair--

CHARLIE

Tom, you're giving them half of the rights to everything for the rest of your life! They get to tell you what kind of work you can accept. It binds and gags you! They tell you jump and you have to ask how high! I can't watch you do this.

YOUNG TOM

So don't.

CHARLIE

What, Tom? I am only trying to protect you! I know if you perform on your own they will come to you on your terms. You won't have to be used as a puppet.

YOUNG TOM

You're trying to hold me back. You're just jealous of me. You want me to end up a teacher like you?

CHARLIE

What's wrong with a teacher like me?

YOUNG TOM

Let's face it, Charlie, you never made it.

CHARLIE

Music is about touching people's lives. I do that as a teacher. I hope some day you can figure out what it's all about, Tommy.

"DO IT ON YOUR OWN"

CHARLIE

DO IT ON YOUR OWN,
SO IT WILL BE YOUR OWN,
OR YOU'LL BE FIGHTIN' THE WORLD OUT THERE.
TAKE IT FROM ME,
THE LABELS AIN'T GONNA BE,
YOU'LL BE FIGHTIN' THE WORLD OUT THERE.
THEY'LL OWN YOU, AND CONDONE YOU,
THEY'LL DISOWN YOU, AND YOU'LL BE ALL ALONE,
FIGHTIN' THE WORLD OUT THERE.

Lights fade stage right, fade up stage left.

JO JO

So, what happened to your teacher?

TOM

He die shortly thereafter. I never got a chance to reconcile with him. He was a very special man. He'd taught me since I was a little boy. I wasn't very nice to him in the end and I still feel badly about that.

JO JO

Did you get the record deal?

TOM

Well, strangely enough, I ended up turning it down. Charlie's words hung in my head so heavy, I actually lifted the pen to sign the contract...but I just couldn't do it. (Beat.) I never got to tell him...what he meant to me. I never got to thank him.

JO JO

Thank him?

TOM

They signed someone else after me...to replace me...and boy...he is like their puppet now!

JO JO

Wow!

TOM

But he gave me a lot more than advice. He taught me what it really means to love music. When you have a gift, it's no accident. Along with that gift, you have to nourish it and work hard at it. Of course, when I retire it'll be no accident, either.

JO JO

You're never going to retire. You always say that. Tom, you give us all so much. I hope you never retire.

TOM

And when you grow up into an amazing singer, or writer, or dancer, or actress, that'll be no accident either. I did it for the love of music. I wanted to touch people's lives and connect with them. That's going straight to the top in my book.

TOM (cont'd)
(to Jo Jo)

"BY ACCIDENT"

DID ELVIS PRESLEY SWING THOSE HIPS BY ACCIDENT?
JAMES DEAN GET SO COOL BY ACCIDENT?
MARILYN MONROE POSE SO WELL?
MARLON BRANDO ACT THAT SUAVE?
DID THEY ALL GET THAT GOOD BY ACCIDENT?

NO, IT TOOK HARD WORK, DEDICATION,
SACRIFICE, A CERTAIN REPUTATION.
YOU THINK HE GOT THAT GOOD?
YOU THINK SHE GOT THAT GOOD?
WHAT DO YOU THINK?
YOU CAN GET THAT GOOD BY ACCIDENT?

BABE RUTH HIT HOME RUNS BY ACCIDENT.
ROGER MARIS THEN TOPPED HIM BY ACCIDENT.
DIMAGGIO GOT FIFTY-SIX STRAIGHT.
MICKEY MANTLE IN THE HALL OF FAME.
DID THEY ALL GET THAT GOOD BY ACCIDENT?

(INSTRUMENTAL)

I USED TO THINK, JUST TAKE THE EASY WAY OUT,
BUT NOW I DON'T EVEN HAVE A SINGLE DOUBT.
IT'S ALL ABOUT DEVOTION.

DID MOHAMMED GET THAT PUNCH BY ACCIDENT?
DID LORD STANLEY NAME THE CUP BY ACCIDENT?
DID LOMBARDI WIN THE SUPER BOWL?
DID ROCKY WIN THE BELT?
DID THEY ALL GET THAT GOOD BY ACCIDENT?

NO, IT TOOK HARD WORK, DEDICATION,
SACRIFICE, A CERTAIN REPUTATION.
YOU THINK HE GOT THAT GOOD?
YOU THINK SHE GOT THAT GOOD?

WHAT DO YA THINK?
YOU CAN GET THAT GOOD BY ACCIDENT?
THINK YOU CAN GET THAT GOOD BY ACCIDENT?
LET TEN YEARS PASS YOU BY ACCIDENT?

IF YOU WANT TO BE THE BEST, NEVER SETTLE FOR LESS.
IF YOU WANT TO WATCH THEM SUCCEED,
YOU'LL REGRET YOU NEVER TOOK THE LEAD.
'CAUSE YOU CAN'T GET THAT GOOD BY ACCIDENT.
NO, IT TAKES HARD WORK, DEDICATION,
SACRIFICE, A CERTAIN REPUTATION.

YOU THINK HE GOT THAT GOOD?

YOU THINK SHE GOT THAT GOOD?
WELL, YOU CAN'T GET THAT GOOD BY ACCIDENT!
YOU CAN'T GET THAT GOOD BY ACCIDENT.

Lights fade to blue.

END OF SCENE

SCENE 4

JENO'S ROOM.

Jeno is alone in her room singing a song called "Straight to the Top" to herself while she takes notes. There is a knock at her door.

Lights on full stage.

JENO
Just a minute, Mom.

Nicki saunters into the room, holding a present.

NICKI
Hi, what's up girl?

JENO
Oh, hi.

NICKI
I told your mom I wanted to surprise you. How's life? (She laughs.) Doesn't change much around here, does it? When you tell people you've spent a few weeks flat on your back, I'm positively certain this is not what they have in mind!

JENO
Nicki, have you seen Anthony lately? He's...he's not returning my phone calls. Beat.) Why are you so nervous? What's wrong with you? What are you on?

NICKI
Jeno, darling, here's the deal. Men come and go. You can't take it personally. Here. Open the present I got you.

JENO
(Struggling to open the gift)
Well, what do you mean by that?

NICKI
Look, before you hear it from someone else, I want to be the one to tell you. Anthony has his interest in me now. He seems to think I've got the goods. Isn't that ironic? You always told me I could never sing or dance as well as you. You won't be hearing from Anthony for a long while.

JENO

Oh.

NICKI

Hey, are you going to open the box or what? I haven't got all day.

Jeno opens the box to find a mirror.

NICKI (cont'd)

I always think it's important for a person of your disposition to be able to take a good, hard look at themselves. Probably haven't done that in a long time, right?

She sets the mirror on Jeno's nightstand to face her.

NICKI (cont'd)

There you are...so you're always reminded of what you've become. Flat on your back where you belong. It'll keep you humble. (She stands.) I have an appointment that Anthony set up for me with a musical producer. Next time you hear from me, my name will be in lights! By the way, do you like the bracelet Anthony bought me? It has more diamonds than yours does.

JENO

It's all lies--the diamonds, the money. Anthony has convinced you into trusting them all. They will only use you and throw you to the curb like some rag doll when they're done with you. Yeah, you're thin, but you're jittery and jumpy. You look like you're on drugs. I can't believe you'd come and talk to me like that if you weren't on drugs. I can't let them use you. Nicki, I was there before you were. I got brainwashed into thinking that their way was the only way. You can do it on your own the right way. You have true talent. Dammit, listen to me. I don't want you to be used, abused and broken down. I'm glad you put that mirror in my face. I know I wasn't being a good friend. Now let me help you. Open your eyes. It looks like you're dreaming your life away now.

NICKI

Keep dreaming, Jeno.

JENO

Nicki, listen. Now I know I had it all wrong. Things have changed for me.

(MORE)

JENO(cont'd)
I still want to do it, but for very different reasons. I think I still can. I have a clear vision on my journey to the top. I'm going back to Tom and I'm planning to go back to school. I'm going to take care of myself. I already quit smoking. But most important, I'm writing music that's coming from my heart.

NICKI
That's a good dream.

Nicki struts towards the door,
looks back to Jen0.

"KEEP ON DREAMIN'" (REPRISE)

NICKI (cont'd)

DO YOU WANT TO BE SINGING,
SINGING LIKE ME?
DO YOU WANT TO BE DANCING?
DANCING LIKE ME?
SO KEEP ON STARIN',
YOU GOT A GOOD VIEW OF ME
I'LL KEEP ON LIVING
WHILE YOU'RE DREAMING YOUR LIFE AWAY.

Nicki exits.

Fade to black.

End of Scene

Scene 5

TOM'S STUDIO.

Nicki, Nora and Tom rehearsing
"They Don't Make Men." Nicki gets
short with Tom.

NICKI

Tom, I told you, Nora keeps singing out of
tune. I'm the one who makes this work.

NORA

Nicki, will you cut it out and just sing?

TOM

Nicki, why are you so jittery?

NICKI

Oh, stop it, Tom. You know you have nothing
without me. I'm leaving.

Nicki storms out.

NORA

She's spending a lot of time with that Anthony.
She's on something. She's always snippy. I'm
worried about her.

TOM

I'm worried, too, but I can't have her
interrupting my class. Oh, when can I retire
already?

Tom walks over to his desk. Jen
enters and goes to Nora. Nora hugs
her.

NORA

Hi, how are you feeling?

JENO

I've been walking a little every day. And these
melodies come to me. I just happened to be
passing by and I wanted to see Tom.

She spots Tom at his desk but
doesn't make a move yet.

NORA

I wish we could get everyone back together
again. I don't like the way Anthony is treating
Nicki. Anthony gave her some kind of drug to
get skinnier.

JENO

(Concerned) Oh, really?

NORA

We're supposed to meet Anthony and his friends at the Club Blue Saturday night.

Tom gets up from his desk, and Jenó interrupts Nora.

JENO

Thanks, Nora, I have to see Tom before he leaves.

Tom is at the piano. Jenó walks over.

Tom, I'm sorry. I don't know what to say. I hurt you, and after being on my own I've been writing songs. One day I hope you will forgive me.

TOM

Well, you did hurt me, a lot. Right now, I don't know if I can forgive you. Jenó, you have to prove to me you really want to come back. I don't want this ever to happen again. You used me before. How do I know you're not using me again? It might take some time to trust you again.

Tom starts to pack up to leave. Jenó tentatively touches his arm but says nothing.

NORA

Sorry to interrupt. Bye, Jenó, it was nice seeing you again.

Nora exits. On her way out, Jeff walks in with a big bunch of flowers.

NORA (cont'd)

Hi, sailor!

She exits.

JEFF

(Slightly bewildered.) I'm a pilot!

JENO

Oh!

JEFF

It's only me. Your mother told me you might be here. She said if she'd given you warning, you probably wouldn't have seen me.

JENO

(Jokingly.) She certainly knows me, no matter how much I hate to admit it.

JEFF

I just wanted to see how you are.

JENO

I'm feeling a lot better. I walk a little more every day. I feel stronger and my mind is clearer. As I walk I notice more good around me, that inspires me. I feel like I'm finding my way.

JEFF

Well, you look beautiful. You seem happier and you actually look happier.

JENO

I feel great. I really feel great. (Beat.) I would even feel better when I can get Tom to trust me again. There's so much good around me and you're part of that. Thank you.

JEFF

Me? Well, I didn't do anything.

JENO

Oh, no? You've been so wonderful to me. So...loving. Thank you.

JEFF

It's my pleasure. Really. (Beat.) So, what did your doctor say? How much longer before you're healed?

JENO

Oh, well...I have to take it slow. But I'm walking. I'm taking one step at a time. But it's more than my back healing, I'm on this great journey, physically, mentally, and emotionally. Taking care of myself has given me such motivation to be a better person and I know I'm growing. Before I had a big head and a big mouth, but now I'm working on making soul bigger.

JEFF

And no more pain?

JENO

Not really. But sometimes it's painful to remember how I treated my friends, my Mom, and Tom. I'll never behave that way again.

JEFF

Don't think about the past, but remember your inspiration.

Jeff kisses her.

JENO

My Grandma had a beautiful voice and she toured Europe in a choir before she got swept off of her feet by Grandpa's sweet talking. Her dream was to write songs and then perform them. She died a sudden death and I want to fulfill her dream that she never fulfilled. Sometimes I feel like she's with me looking out for me. Like my guardian angel. I not only want to do this for me, I want to fulfill her dream for her. I know she would want me to and I know she's looking down on me, guiding me. I will. I have learned a lot lately. In an instant something can take your life away and then you have to fight to get it back. Anything that doesn't kill me will only make me stronger. I'm just feeling a little confused. I really didn't count on liking you so much.

JEFF

Things happen. It's not your fault.

"NOBODY'S FAULT"

JEFF (cont'd)

'CAUSE IT'S NOBODY'S FAULT.
IT'S NOBODY'S FAULT.
AIN'T NOBODY'S FAULT SO JUST TAKE A REST,
CAUSE YOUR MIND'S A MESS.
'CAUSE IT'S NOBODY'S FAULT.
IT'S NOBODY'S FAULT.
AIN'T NOBODY'S FAULT THAT YOU FEEL THE LOVIN',
NOBODY'S JUDGIN'.
'CAUSE I WANT AND I NEED,
'CAUSE I WANT AND I NEED,
'CAUSE I WANT AND I NEED YOUR LOVE.

THESE PEOPLE ONLY WISH THEY HAD A LOVE LIKE OURS.
THEY KNEW NEVER KNEW WHAT HAPPINESS COULD TURN INTO.
THANK GOD AT LEAST WE TRIED, OR WE WOULD HAVE NEVER KNEW.

(INSTRUMENTAL)

(cont'd)

JEFF AND JENO

IT'S NOBODY'S FAULT.
IT'S NOBODY'S FAULT.
NO ONE KNOW'S BUT ME,
THAT WE FEEL THE SAME,
SO DON'T FEEL NO SHAME.
CAUSE IT'S NOBODY'S FAULT.
IT'S NOBODY'S FAULT.
IT'S NOBODY'S FAULT
THAT WE FEEL THE SAME
AND NOBODY TO BLAME.
CAUSE I WANT AND I NEED,
CAUSE I WANT AND I NEED,
CAUSE I WANT AND I NEED
YOUR LOVE.

JEFF

Wow. You've got it, you really do! Whatever it is, you've got it. I just know you could really be a star.

JENO

Well, thanks, but I'm not really sure if that's what I'm after anymore. I've been putting together a few songs and many people in my life don't realize it, but through all the ways they have challenged me...I think I actually learned something. Besides, I sort of had my one big shot and...I blew it.

JEFF

What happened?

JENO

Well, I had an audition with the Nederbergers--

JEFF

Oh, that's my Dad's brother.

JENO

Huh?

JEFF

Was it Uncle Rick or Uncle Dan? I don't know who's doing auditions these days.

JENO

What are you--

JEFF

You know I'm a Nederberger, don't you? Geez, Jen, don't you know my last name?

JENO

Um...you're kidding, right?

JEFF

You wanna see my birth certificate?

JENO

I really had no idea that you were...I didn't know...

JEFF

Hey, listen, I could help you. All I have to do is make one phone call and you're in. I'm happy to do it for you. It would be my pleasure.

JENO

No. Thank you. I want to do it on my own. It's important to me that I do it the right way.

JEFF

It ain't over till it's over?

JENO

It ain't over till it's over. I let them break my back. But I'm not going to let them break my heart.

Fade to blue lights.

END OF SCENE

SCENE 6

A NIGHTCLUB.

Dance music plays. Lights stage left, dim lights rest of stage.

MAFIOSO type is regaling Nicki & Nora and Anthony.

MAFIOSO

So, I says to my client--I like to call 'em clients--I says I know you can do better than ten songs. Make it a cool dozen.

Nicki and Anthony burst into laughter. Nora doesn't think it's funny.

NORA

So you threatened him into writin' more songs for you?

MAFIOSO

N, I coerced him. I coerce my clients. I threaten the other people.

NICKI

Nora! Can I speak to you in private, please!

Nicki & Nora step away from table. Jenó walks in and notices the crowd and familiar faces she decides to disguise herself as a gangster using the jacket and hat lifted from the coat rack.

NICKI (cont'd)

You've been moping all night long! What is your problem?

NORA

Nicki, I have a really bad feeling about this guy. I think maybe we should leave. And you're so testy and jittery. What's wrong with you? He's got you on something, doesn't he?

NICKI

What? Oh, I get it. You're jealous.

NORA

Jealous? Listen, Nicki--

NICKI

No, you listen. I think you should go.

NORA

What?

NICKI

After dessert. I don't want to make a scene.

NORA

Make a scene? Look, I'm just trying to be a good friend--

NICKI

Then keep your trap shut. Whatever you've got to say, I don't wanna hear it. This is my big day and nothing's going to screw it up. Got it? Got it?!

NORA

Whatever you say. But try to get me in, too, will ya? I'm not here for my health. We're going to get ourselves shot.

They go back over to the table.

ANTHONY

So, uh, Frankie, what do you think about my girl Nicki over here?

MAFIOSO

She's got some strong lookin' parents, that's for sure!

Jeno enters with Jeff.

MAFIOSO (cont'd)

(He nudges Nora)

She needs to be thinner. Waify. That's what they like now. Give her some of those magic little pills of yours, Anthony.

ANTHONY

So, uh, Frankie, do you think you can make my girl a big star?

NICKI

She'll be all right. So, anyway, Frankie--

MAFIOSO

Yeah, I think you could be a big star. Why don't you come by my place of business tomorrow and we can talk about it.

NICKI

Oh, you mean for an audition?

MAFIOSO

(Smiling devilishly.) Yeah, an audition. There are a few clients I want you to see. If you make them feel nice, then we can talk about your audition.

ANTHONY

(Changing the subject) Well, you should really hear the girl sing. She's something, all, right.

MAFIOSO

Anthony, don't ever interrupt me. (To Nicki) A few favors for me, and I'll do a few favors for you. I plan to hear you sing a lot.

Nicki pulls Anthony away.

NICKI

Anthony, what's this about clients? I thought you were going to get me an audition. I want to be a star. I'm not going to do it that way.

ANTHONY

Listen, if you want to get it, you're going to have to do it my way.

He grabs Nicki's hand and rears back to slap her.

JENO

Anthony, get your hands off her!

Jeff comes from behind and punches out Anthony. Anthony slumps to the floor, unconscious.

JENO (cont'd)

Nicki, you thought you were going straight to the top. Now look where you're going! You're skinny and strung out. You're doing it the sleazy way. You want to go straight to the top, the right way. I have the talent to do it, you watch me. If this is the only way to get there, I don't want it. I'm not for sale. And Anthony, as for you--

"HIGH CLASS CROOK"

SPIRIT AND JENO

YOU WALK AROUND IN YOUR FANCY CLOTHES,
USING IT UP YOUR NOSE.
YOU DRIVE AROUND IN YOUR FANCY CAR;

YOU, SCHEMED TO GET THAT FAR.
YOU'RE JUST A HIGH CLASS CROOK,
AND YOU'RE ALL THE SAME TO ME.

YOU THINK YOU COULD GET AWAY
WITH THE LIVES YOU BETRAYED?
YOU THINK YOU COULDN'T BE BEAT
STEALING SHOES OFF THEIR FEET?

YOU'RE JUST A HIGH CLASS CROOK
AND YOU'RE ALL THE SAME TO ME.
WELL, I'M HERE TO WARN YA
THAT I'LL SCORN YA FROM A MILE AWAY,
AND I'LL BEAT YA THEN DEFEAT YA
WITH EVERY GAME THAT YOU PLAY.

YOU'RE JUST A HIGH CLASS CROOK
AND YOU'RE ALL THE SAME TO ME.
WELL, WIPE THAT GRIN OFF YOUR FACE,
BECAUSE YOU ARE A DISGRACE.
YOU'VE GOT HANDS OF SIN
AND I DON'T KNOW WHERE THEY HAVE BEEN.
YOU'RE JUST A HIGH CLASS CROOK
AND YOU'RE ALL THE SAME TO ME.
WELL, I'M HERE TO WARN YA
THAT I'LL SCORN YA FROM A MILE AWAY,
AND I'LL BEAT YA AND DEFEAT YA
WITH EVERY GAME THAT YOU PLAY.
YOU'RE JUST A HIGH CLASS CROOK.

JENO

It's time we look out for each other.

Jeno, Jeff, Nicki & Nora exit
together. Anthony is still out on
the floor.

Fade to blue lights.

End of scene

SCENE 7

DOCTOR'S OFFICE.

The Doctor is giving Jenó an examination.

Lights full stage.

DOCTOR

You may be walking now. You say you don't have any pain?

JENO

Nope.

DOCTOR

Hmmm. Well, that's impossible. I'm sure you have pain, but for whatever reason you just can't acknowledge it. (Beat.) Are you sure you're not in pain?

JENO

No pain.

DOCTOR

Well, keep on doing what you're doing. It's working. Be prepared for the pain. That's my advice.

JENO

I feel great, actually. I feel better than I did before the injury. I went in strong-minded and I came out even stronger. It's all in my mind. I believe the future's in my hands now.

DOCTOR

Well, don't get your hopes up. My diagnoses are usually never wrong, you know. I'm well aware of a person's potential. You know your body best.

JENO

I doubt that.

DOCTOR

You overextend yourself and you don't want a relapse. You could wind up even worse off. I recommend bed rest for the next month or so...(Beat.) Take care of yourself.

JENO

I spent more time lying on my back, but instead of counting the cracks in the ceiling or watching the light change on the wallpaper, I've been writing songs. And you know what? You've inspired me. I thought about all the people in my life who've...influenced me. Who've...made a difference. Of course, you're one of them. And that horrible teacher who put me down...

DOCTOR

You've been writing songs?

He walks Jeno out to the front desk, where Mrs. Baldello is in the waiting room, reading a magazine.

JENO

Speak of the devil.

MRS. BALDELLO

Jenny O'Connor! It's been a very long time...

JENO

It certainly has. I've got a present for you, after all these years...

MRS. BALDELLO

Well. Do you? This I have to hear. Jenny tried to write a song. You're not going to try to sing it, too, are you?

"YOU TOLD ME"

JENO

YOU TOLD ME I'D NEVER MAKE IT.
YOU TOLD ME I'D NEVER SUCCEED.
I THINK YOU BETTER CHECK YOUR RECORDS, MA'AM.
NO ONE MAKES ME DOUBT MY DREAMS.

DON'T TELL ME I CAN'T DO IT ALL.
FROM HERE THE JOKE'S ON YOU.
I THINK YOU BETTER CHECK YOUR RECORDS, MA'AM.
NO ONE MAKES ME LOOK LIKE A FOOL.

I KNOW I WAS CRAZY, I KNOW I WAS WILD.
I KNOW I ACTED LIKE A NUTTY CHILD.

BUT THAT WAS THEN AND THIS IS NOW.
THE TABLES ARE TURNED,
NOW YOU'RE IN FOR IT SOMEHOW.

THEY MUST HAVE TOLD YOU YOU'D NEVER MAKE IT, TOO.
IT WOULD NEVER HAPPEN ONE DAY.
WELL, I DON'T CARE WHAT THEY TOLD YOU,
YOU GET THE HELL OUT OF MY WAY.

I'LL BE DAMNED TO LET THAT HAPPEN AGAIN.
I'LL BE DAMNED TO LIVE IN FEAR.
KEEP BRINGING FUEL FOR MY FIRE,
YOU ALL, BECAUSE OF YOU IS WHY I'M HERE.

I KNOW I WAS CRAZY, I KNOW I WAS WILD.
I KNOW I ACTED LIKE A NUTTY CHILD.
BUT THAT WAS THEN AND THIS IS NOW.
THE TABLES ARE TURNED,
NOW YOU'RE IN FOR IT SOMEHOW.

(INSTRUMENTAL)

YOU BETTER TELL THEM THEY CAN DO IT ALL.
DON'T STOP DREAMS BECAUSE OF FEAR.
KEEP BRINGING FUEL FOR MY FIRE, YOU ALL.
BECAUSE OF YOU IS WHY I'M HERE.

JENO (cont'd)

(To Mrs. Baldello) I can do whatever I put my
mind to. Because of you standing in my way,
I'm only that much stronger. You became fuel
for my fire. Thank you!

MRS. BALDELLO

Well, Jenno, you're not that sad little girl
anymore. You're definitely all grown up. You're
very talented.

Anna has been listening at the
door.

"DAMNED IF YOU DO"

ANNA

YOU'RE DAMNED IF YOU DO,
YOU'RE DAMNED IF YOU DON'T.
YOU'RE DAMNED IF YOU DO,
CAUSE IT AIN'T GONNA FLOAT.

YOU'RE DAMNED IF YOU DO,
YOU'RE DAMNED IF YOU DON'T.
YOU'RE DAMNED IF YOU DO,
SO GET OUT OF THE BOAT.

OPEN YOUR EYES,

'CAUSE IT AIN'T NO SURPRISE.
HELL, YOU'RE DAMNED EACH WAY,
WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO SAY?

YOU'RE DAMNED IF YOU DO,
YOU'RE DAMNED IF YOU DON'T.
YOU'RE DAMNED IF YOU DO,
DON'T SIT AROUND AND MOPE.
SITTING AROUND WITH YOUR ASS ON THE LINE,
DON'T YOU SEE, KID, YOU AIN'T GONNA SHINE.

OPEN YOUR EYES,
'CAUSE IT AIN'T NO SURPRISE.
HELL YOU'RE DAMNED EACH WAY,
WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO SAY?
THINGS AIN'T WHAT THEY USED TO BE IN IRELAND.
IT AIN'T LIKE WE WERE TAUGHT THEN.
YOU WORK WITH YOUR HANDS
AND PUT BREAD IN YOUR MOUTH
AND THANK GOD THAT THE RIVER WASN'T IN DROUGHT.
THINGS AIN'T WHAT THEY USED TO BE IN IRELAND.

SCHOOL WAS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING.
YOU DANCIN' ON STAGE,
YOU START GETTING A NAME,
GOING DOWN THE HILL WITH ALL THAT FAME.
WELL, THINGS AIN'T WHAT THEY USED TO BE IN IRELAND.

(INSTRUMENTAL)

YOU'RE DAMNED IF YOU DO,
YOU'RE DAMNED IF YOU DON'T
NOTHIN' LEFT TO SAY, KID,
GO YOUR OWN WAY.

Anna comes into the room.

ANNA (cont'd)

You sure told them, didn't you?

JENO

You heard?

ANNA

Yes. I was listening and thinking at the door.
You're damned either way. You have such a good
voice. You really do have a gift. Grandma would
have wanted you to use it. You need to go your
own way.

Anna hands Jenno a journal to write
her songs in.

ANNA (cont'd)

Grandma used to sing when I was at the house. Her whole face lit up when she would sing. If you don't follow your heart, you're bound to be heartbroken. That's not what I want for you. I want you to go for it, but try to finish college at some point, even part time, while you fulfill your dream.

Jeno notices necklace with a ring attached.

ANNA (cont'd)

That was the only thing she had left before she died, this was meant for you, she would have wanted you to have it.

Anna helps Jeno to put on the necklace

JENO

I will. I love to write. I think I might be good at it, too. I want to write a musical. If it wasn't for Anthony rejecting me, my friends backstabbing me, and that Mrs. Baldello telling me to hang up my dancing shoes, I may never have wanted to be creative. Thank you, Mom.

Lights fade to blue.

End of Scene

SCENE 8

TOM'S STUDIO.

A few seconds of "Shivering" play,
Tom is standing in front of his
class.

ENSEMBLE

"SHIVERING"

SHIVERING, QUIVERING, JITTERING
SHIVERING, QUIVERING, JITTERING
SHIVERING, QUIVERING, JITTERING
DON'T YA SEE WHAT YOU'RE DOING TO ME?

TOM

Hey guys that sounded good. I just wanted to
thank you all so much. You have made me so
proud. I'm going to miss you all.

YOUNG STUDENT #1

But all you talk about is retiring!

YOUNG STUDENT #2

This is what you wanted, isn't it?

TOM

I know, I know. Retirement's reversible,
though...right?

Jeno walks in with Jeff, looking
sophisticated. You could hear a
pin drop.

JENO

I'm here and I'm ready to be part of the group,
if you would allow me to.

TOM

Where have you been?

JENO

I've been pretty far away...and pretty nearby.

TOM

I'm glad you're back.

JENO

I just want to sing and dance.

TOM

Well, you've come to the right place. But it's
my last day. I'm retiring. I'm hanging up my
baton, as they say.

JENO

Tom, wait. I need to tell you something. I need your expertise, and let's face it, Tom, I still need your guidance. I'm sorry. I've written a few songs, and even one for you. I'm trying to convince you not to go.

STUDENT #3

What's it about?

"BETTER LATE THAN NEVER"

Jeno pantomimes her musical concept to the cast. The Spirit is present but no one except Jen0 can see or hear it.

SPIRIT AND JENO

BETTER LATE THAN NEVER,
NOW I CAN HOLD MY HEAD HIGH.
I KNEW I'D HAVE TO TAKE THE HARD ROAD,
BUT I WAS WILLING TO TRY.

BETTER LATE THAN NEVER, IF I'M TIRED SOME.
GOD'S WITH ME WHEREVER I GO,
NOW HE'S PROUD OF WHAT I'VE DONE.
BETTER LATE THAN NEVER, BETTER LATE THAN NEVER.

AT LEAST NOW I'VE LEARNED.
BE GOOD TO PEOPLE ON THE RIGHT ROAD
AND YOU'LL NEVER GET BURNED.

HAD TO LEARN THE HARD WAY,
TO LET GO OF THE PAST.
HAD TO SEARCH FOR SOMETHING,
SOMETHING THAT WOULD LAST.

I JUST WANTED THE BEST FOR YOU.
I WANTED YOU YO HAVE IT ALL
EVEN WHEN I SEE YOU FALLING
GET BACK UP AND STAND TALLER.

BETTER LATE THAN NEVER, BETTER LATE THAN WRONG.
PLEASE ACCEPT MY APOLOGY FOR ALL I'VE DONE WRONG.
BETTER LATE THAN NEVER.

BETTER LATE THAN NEVER,
NOW I CAN HOLD MY HEAD HIGH.
I KNEW I'D HAVE TO TAKE THE HARD ROAD,
BUT I WAS WILLING TO TRY.

HAD TO LEARN THE HARD WAY,
TO LET GO OF THE PAST.

HAD TO SEARCH FOR SOMETHING,
SOMETHING THAT WOULD LAST.

TOM

That's not the same girl.

JENO

I've got all these songs now, and I need you to
work with me. That is, if you'd like to work
with me. I need your hands...your expertise

Jeno goes to hold his hands.

TOM

It would be my pleasure. On one condition...

He hands her his baton that he was
using to direct the younger
students.

Take it.

JENO

Me? How could I be a--

TOM

Before you were gifted. Now you have something
to offer. I'm handing it over to you. If you
want it--

JENO

Yes. Thank you.

TOM

Just remember, students are like seeds. You
need to be the right seed, in enough water, in
a pot and in the right soil--

JENO

With the best light on it every day.

(To the students.)

You have to do it for the right reasons and not
try to take the easy way out. If you have the
true talent you can make it to the top by doing
it the right way. I know. I learned from the
best.

Jeno takes the baton.

JENO (cont'd)

So...you'll work with me, will you?

TOM

I don't know. I'm too old for this stuff. Did you put your name up on this list of people who will let me retire? No one will sign it. How come no one will let me retire?

Everyone laughs.

JENO

Do it because you love it. Do it because you truly love the music.

TOM

It's all about being true to yourself and becoming one with the universe. That's going straight to the top in my book. Touching people's lives. Don't ever forget that. It takes hard work, determination, sacrifice, the ability to take risks and with that you can do anything you put your mind too.

JENO

I'm sorry. I forgot for a while. But now I couldn't if I tried.

TOM

(Pause.) Okay! But only for you -- then retirement, here I come! We have everything we need. I do all the music and retirement jokes. You all can do the writing, singing and dancing. Let's put on a musical! If it bombs, then so be it. We have true talent it has to hit...it's coming from our hearts.

One person claps, the next person claps. Jo Jo gives Tom a big hug. He starts to walk away.

JENO

Where are you going?

TOM

Retiring.

He laughs and sits down at his piano.

Where are you going?

JENO

(Takes a deep breath, sighs.) Straight to the top. The right way.

TOM

Now, that's what I want to hear.

JENO

I don't think you understand what I'm saying.
This is hitting Broadway! I'm going to do it,
or die trying!

TOM

I'm back. I couldn't leave you all even when I
tried. Now I'm back. What were you saying? Do,
or die trying? With that fire burning in your
soul and that love in your heart...combined it
with doing it the right way. Well, now you've
truly learned what it takes to go straight to
the top. You'll all go down in history!

"STRAIGHT TO THE TOP"

ENSEMBLE

GET OUT OF MY WAY, I'M COMING THROUGH,
I'M GOING STRAIGHT TO THE TOP.
DON'T KNOW WHERE YOU'VE BEEN, I COULD CARE LESS.
I'M GOING STRAIGHT TO THE TOP.
I COULD TAKE YOU OR LEAVE YOU, LOVE OR DECEIVE YOU,
I'M GOING STRAIGHT TO THE TOP.

I DON'T CARE WHO YOU THINK YOU ARE,
I DON'T CARE WHO YOU THINK YOU KNOW,
I DON'T CARE JUST WHAT YOU'VE DONE,
MY CONSCIENCE IS CLEAR,
I'M GOING STRAIGHT TO THE TOP.

(INSTRUMENTAL)

I USED TO CARE WHAT OTHERS THOUGHT,
I USED TO CARE WHAT OTHERS SAID ABOUT ME.
BUT NOW I'VE LEARNED TO RISE ABOVE
ALL THAT TALK AND HYPOCRISY.

REST MY HEAD AT NIGHT, I DON'T THINK TWICE.
WE'RE GOING STRAIGHT TO THE TOP.
DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU, I HAVE NO REGRETS.
WE'RE GOING STRAIGHT TO THE TOP.
BEEN THERE, DONE THAT. IT DON'T MEAN JACK.
WE'RE GOING STRAIGHT TO THE TOP.

I DON'T CARE WHO YOU THINK YOU ARE,
I DON'T CARE WHO YOU THINK YOU KNOW,
I DON'T CARE JUST WHAT YOU'VE DONE,
MY CONSCIENCE IS CLEAR,
WE'RE GOING STRAIGHT TO THE TOP.
YOU CAN GO YOUR WAY, BECAUSE WE'RE GOING OURS.
WE'RE GOING STRAIGHT TO THE TOP!

Blackout.

THE END